

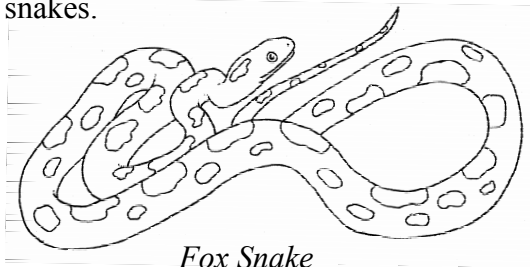
*Finding and identifying amphibians and reptiles can be fun. However, some snakes are poisonous so you should be cautious and only approach a snake if you are certain it is not venomous. **NO POISONOUS SNAKES HAVE EVER BEEN FOUND IN THE PARK** but the Massasauga Rattlesnake is known to inhabit parts of northern Indiana.*

*Handling any amphibians or reptiles should be avoided, as they are wild animals. It is **illegal to remove any animals** from the park.*

## REPTILES

All reptiles have a covering of scales which allow them to live away from the moist habitats that amphibians depend on. Reptiles either give birth to live young or lay eggs on land. Most are carnivorous. All reptiles breathe air, even those that live in the water. They are cold blooded so have little internal control of their body temperature. They regulate their temperature by basking in the sun or seeking shade. Most hibernate in winter to avoid the extreme cold.

There are four subgroups of reptiles: snakes, turtles, lizards and crocodilians. At Potato Creek State Park we only have turtles and snakes.



Fox Snake

### Snakes

*\*Limbs absent*

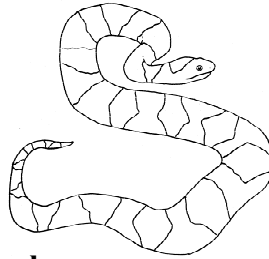
*\*Fused, immovable, transparent eyelids*

*\*No external ear openings*

*\*Teeth are generally small, sharp & curved backwards.*



### Water Snake



### Eastern Garter Snake

This snake is commonly seen sunning itself near trails or in clearings. It has a stripe, which may vary in color, down the center of its back and along its sides. The largest of these *nonpoisonous* garter snakes reach 4 feet. Most are much smaller. They eat frogs, worms, minnows and insects.

### Banded Water Snake

Often misidentified as a water moccasin (cottonmouth) which is not found in northern Indiana, this feisty snake is *nonpoisonous*. It has dark bands across its back, although older ones may appear black. They may be seen sunning on a bank or swimming in the water. They eat frogs and fish.

### Black Rat Snake

This *nonpoisonous* glossy black snake is seen in fields and woodlands. One of our largest snakes, it may grow up to 8 feet long, but averages around 4 feet. It is an excellent mouse and rat catcher. The snake may venture into barns in search of potential prey.

### Fox Snake

A *nonpoisonous* snake, found in a variety of habitats. It is rather slow, and when disturbed may not attempt to escape. It shows irritation by vibrating its tail, but rarely bites. They are grayish yellow and have a dull orange head and tail. Like the black rat snake it preys on rodents.

### Eastern Milk Snake

This *harmless* snake is often mistaken for the poisonous copperhead which is not found in northern Indiana. They have chocolate or reddish brown blotches on a tan or gray body and a light Y or V shaped blotch on the back of their head. This woodland snake hunts mice and voles.

### Eastern Hognose Snake

The hognose has a wide head and pointed, upturned snout. It has a yellow or light brown body with black or gray blotches. The hognose is *nonpoisonous*, but when disturbed it flattens its neck to look like a cobra and may roll over and play dead. This behavior earns the snake its other names, the puff or spreading adder and blow viper. They live in dry, open fields, often near woodland and prey largely on frogs and toads.

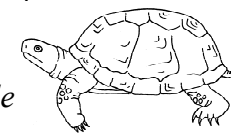


### Turtles

*\*Have an upper (carapace) and lower shell (plastron), connected by a bridge.*

*\*Have no teeth but a sharp beak*

*\*All lay eggs*



Box Turtle

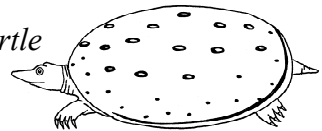
### Painted Turtle

This common turtle is usually seen basking in the sun on logs in the water. Its name comes from the red and orange markings on the body and shell margins. Males have long front claws, used to stroke the female's head during courtship. Painted turtles eat algae, small fish and aquatic insects.

### Snapping Turtle

The snapping turtle likes to inhabit the bottom of shallow pools. Since it is unable to pull into its shell, it will defend itself by snapping. Sometimes weighing as much as 60 pounds, snappers will eat anything they can catch, including ducks and large fish.

### Spiny Softshell Turtle



### Spiny Softshell Turtle

This turtle is covered with leathery skin which extends beyond the edge of the shell. Its body is flat and circular. A long pointed snout and an unusually long neck add to its unique appearance. It prefers to remain hidden in sand or mud at the bottom of lakes and rivers, so is rarely seen. They eat fish and other aquatic animals.

### Box Turtles

These turtles live in woods and fields. They have a high boxlike shell which is dark brown and patterned with yellow markings. At the front of the lower shell is a hinged flap which enables the turtle to pull into its shell when disturbed. It eats worms, insects and plants. Box turtles can live up to 100 years.

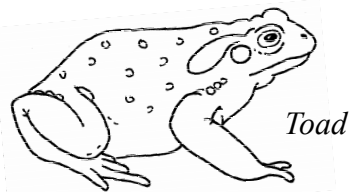
## Amphibians

The word amphibians comes from the Greek 'amphibios' meaning 'two lives.' Amphibians have a larval stage, which live in water, and an adult stage, which are able to live on land. The two stages are very different. For example, a tadpole (larva) changes into a frog (adult). This transformation is called metamorphosis.

Adult amphibians breathe through their skin and throat lining as well as their lungs. They have to keep their skin moist, so most are active at night when it is cool, or during wet seasons. Like reptiles they are cold blooded having to avoid extreme temperatures, so hibernate in the winter.

### Frogs and Toads

- \*Four well developed limbs
- \*Hind legs used for jumping
- \*No conspicuous tail
- \*Glands keep their skin moist



Toad

### Spring Peeper

A sign of spring, this tiny 1 inch long frog is found on the edge of wetlands emerging from hibernation when the temperature rises in March. Peepers range in color from light tan to dark brown and most have a dark X-shaped mark on their back. Their name comes from the male's mating call which is a single high-pitched 'peep.'

### Gray Treefrog

This treefrog is gray, with brilliant yellow under their legs, but can turn green to blend in with its surroundings. It can grow to 2.5 inches long. In the late spring, the frogs breeding season, its loud, prolonged trill can be heard.



### Chorus Frog

This is a ground dwelling frog that only climbs low plants. They are greenish brown to gray with dark stripes on their back. Its raspy call heard early in spring sounds like someone pulling their thumb across a comb.

### Leopard Frog

Conspicuous ridges on its back, a sharp nose and a pale stripe on its upper lip are characteristic of this frog. It is covered in sharply defined, light bordered spots. Its mating call resembles a long rattling snore.

### Green Frog

This frog, the most common species in the park, is usually green but some are brown or tan. It has smooth skin with two raised ridges running from each ear down to its rear. The male's call sounds like a loose banjo string being plucked.

### Bullfrog

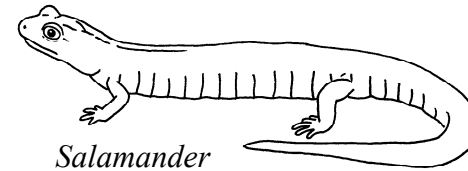
This large frog has a ridge of skin that begins behind the eye, runs above the eardrum and down to the front legs. Bullfrogs are found near permanent bodies of water. They breed in May and June when the male's deep call can be heard.

### American Toad

The toad has warty skin with dark blotches on its brown to reddish back. They are most active just after nightfall. They live in forests and meadows as well as gardens. A toad may stalk its prey by walking slowly towards it, then use their sticky tongue to catch it. Their call is a long trill, which sounds like a bell ringing.

### Salamanders

- \*Smooth moist skin
- \*Long tail
- \*Four legs
- \*Most are silent and nocturnal



Salamander

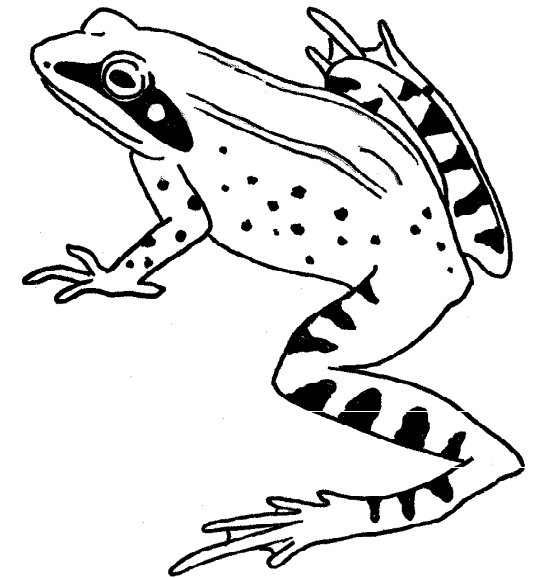
### Red-backed Salamander

This slender woodland salamander seldom grows longer than 4 inches. It lives under logs or dead leaves and is active mainly at night. There are two variations in color, one has a reddish stripe down its back, the other is dark gray and lacks the stripe. Some may be in between the two forms.

### Tiger Salamander

This is the largest land dwelling salamander in the world, growing up to 13 inches long. Its body is olive brown with yellow or tan spots or stripes. This nocturnal animal hides under rocks and rotting logs in the daytime and hunts for insects and grubs at night.

# Reptiles and Amphibians of Potato Creek State Park



## Interpretive Services Potato Creek State Park

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